

New Forms of Religious Life

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THE Church's law of life is that she should grow without ever altering in her essence or nature.

Hence we may expect to see many of the elements in her actual life among men being born and growing and not dying. For neither does she die herself. One of these elements is what is ordinarily called the "religious" life. This may be taken to mean, a life lived by those who wish to observe our Lord's "counsels," and not merely His commands. In a word, it means the sort of life lived by those who wish to be so like Him as possible. It has been, for many centuries, their habit to "take vows," and in some measure to differentiate themselves exteriorly from those who do not do so, in domicile, dress, rule, and general habit of life.

This ideal has, however, followed a line of historical development. Even in apostolic times we get the first beginnings of an "order" of "widows," and of "virgins." St. Paul certainly regards "widows," carefully selected, as playing a definite part in the charitable life of the Church. We very early find epitaphs, for example, of girls who were designated as "virgin" at the age, say, of nine or ten, implying that they were dedicated to virginity. For even the earlier southern marriages never degenerated into anything like Indian child-unions. Such maidens lived a secluded life at home, devoted to prayer. But the life sought by men animated with sublime ideals is more easily observed. Obviously, we need enter into no detail.

Men, "enamored of eternity," very soon withdrew themselves from the atrocious circumstances of the decadent world, and became "hermits." Thus, St. Paul; St. Anthony, just as famous. But even Anthony acted as spiritual father to many thousands. Organization was soon necessary; and at once undertaken, by St. Pachomius, for example, in Egypt; St. Hilarion, in Palestine; Mar Agwin, in Mesopotamia and Syria. "Monks" on the whole replaced the "hermits"; the orderly life in community, the individual exercise

of asceticism. St. Basil in the East, St. Benedict in the West, are (with others, like Paulinus) immortal names connected with the establishment of monachism, which, it may be said, saved at any rate the West from corruption.

But the day came when St. Francis and St. Dominic, and with them all the "active" orders like those who went to rescue Christian slaves, sent men out of cloisters, bade them move about, and yet, asked that they should be known as true "religious." Opposition was fierce—such men were regarded, often enough, as mere gad-about. St. Ignatius arrived. He told his men to wear ordinary priestly dress, proper to each country—secular dress, in fact, where there was no longer any ecclesiastical costume. He emancipated them from the long hours spent in choir. The outcry again was loud. "Such men could not be called 'religious' at all: such an 'order' ought, in fact, to be suppressed." However, like the Friars, the Jesuits became one of the normal ingredients of actual Catholic life. I do not think that there has been much development since then in the "religious" life of Catholic men; for, I hardly count the arrival of the "Brothers"—Christian Brothers, Alexian, Xaverian Brothers as a "development"; for, what specified them was their *not* being priests, and, on the whole, Trappists (for example) had not normally been priests, nor the Brothers of St. John of God.

With regard to women, we remember that while St. Francis of Assisi cloistered his Poor Clares relentlessly, St. Francis de Sales wanted to uncloister his "Visitandines," that they might "visit": but apparently the time was not *quite* ripe; they live even now behind grilles. However, St. Vincent de Paul, though in reality he antedated St. Francis de Sales by a few years, did manage to do what was needed. He created a band of Sisters to whom he said that they must have "no monastery but the sick-room; no cell but a hired lodging; no chapel save the parish church; no cloister, but the street." We perceive that St. Vincent himself has not, in his posterity, fully realized this early ideal. The Sisters of Charity, today, are unbelievably emancipated compared with their predecessors; yet, in many ways they are "enclosed" in regulations.

The French Revolution, and more or less contemporary upheavals, made it necessary for nuns either to cease to be

nuns at all, or, to be so in conditions of unparalleled liberty. The "suggestion" had been made; it was accepted. Thenceforward, we see uneasy tentatives all making towards a *new development* in the religious life. Women, bound by vow, were to mingle in ordinary life undifferentiated by costume or by hair cut short, or by being currently named "sister." What is tentative, is usually hesitating, and apt to revert. I seem to have noticed many "communities," initiated by some priest or courageous woman for the purpose of doing this or that which nuns normally cannot, very soon changing back to the "type," developing a costume, multiplying rules, becoming, in short, "nuns" in the old sense. This must be partly due to a feminine love for meticulously regulated "custom," or, to pressure of public demand—for example, poor people are accustomed to the white cornette; know "where they are" with nuns; do not believe that the visiting "ladies" are any different from, say, welfare officials, and are quite doubtful whether they are really Catholics. And God forbid that the white coif should ever disappear!

All the same, we cannot possibly assert that any living thing shall develop no further than it has done. Catholic "religious" life is developing. Take one example. Neither priests nor nuns hitherto are allowed to be (normally) doctors, surgeons, or obstetricians. Yet in the missions to Natives, there must be someone to do each of these works. Hence the apparition of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, entirely composed of Catholic women-doctors or of those who cooperate with them, like nurses or cooks. It was founded by a woman whose name must never be allowed to lapse—Dr. Agnes McLaren, who at sixty became a Catholic, and at seventy-two went to India to convince her own eyes of the work that *must* be done there by Catholics, if a great part of missionary effort were not to lapse, by default, into the hands of others. Another woman, humble, self-effacing, totally dedicated—Lady Mary Howard—became first London president of the London committee that foster-mothered the Rawalpindi hospital inaugurated by Dr. McLaren. The medical missionary work has so prospered that today the Society, whose headquarters are at Brookland, Washington, D. C., U. S. A., is able, not only to do a substantial work in India, but, at long last,

to establish itself in London. It has not, at the moment of writing, its secured home; but that persevering Catholic worker, Miss Pauline Willis¹ is, for the while, fairygodmothering it, and would supply any details about it to inquirers. My point is, that this Society, under the guidance of Dr. Anna Dengel, consist of women who are *real* religious, and *real* doctors. The step forward is immense. Hair uncropped: costume—grey, white, red—less noticeable even than that of hospital sisters in the War: restrictions, within their vocation, none at all.

I was present at a recent meeting, composed of women and girls who were really likely to appreciate the *point* of what was said, at the invitation of Dr. Mary Kidd, whose self-devotion can be in no way inferior to Dr. Dengel's. It was easy to see how the nature of the appeal corresponded with something already existing in the ideals and desires of the intelligent audience.

It is not, then, difficult to perceive that the "line of advance" is, by way of an *elimination of restrictions*, which implies an ever greater *reliability of character*: for, if it was easier to "be good" in a Benedictine cloister, than as a Franciscan; and, as a Friar, than as an early Jesuit; so, it will be harder to be truly supernatural in the new sort of religious life (if what we have said is at all typical) than behind grilles, under veils, and encorsetted in rules.

Now, I have quoted this Medical Society, not only because I so much admire it, but, because I think it *is* typical of a much wider movement.

In 1929, there was a reunion near Salzburg of representatives of what may be called "modern" religious societies. I quite see that the following list may not be illuminative, in so far as I give no details of what the several societies aim at: but, I want their mere number to produce the effect, and I think it can be safely said that to all applies what was said by the Holy Father about Dr. Dengel's Institute—that it entirely corresponds with his mind and wish.

To this meeting, then, from America came, besides the Medical Missionary Society, the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate; the Missionary Catechists; the Sisters of the

¹24 Holland Street, London, W. 8.

Social Mission, and three other such societies. From Austria (a very fertile terrain since the War), two such societies; and I do not here mention the White Cross because its headquarters have transferred themselves to Germany. Belgium sent delegates from two societies; Canada, from two; of which one was that of the Sisters of Service, invaluable for our emigrants. Czecho-Slovakia sent women from three such communities; England, also from three, though they are examples, perhaps, of what I mean by groups gravitating back, in the concrete, to the customary type of religious communities. France, under pressure of the restrictions by no means inaugurated but oppressively imposed (at the bidding of Freemason and other anti-Catholic groups) by M. Combes, has proved very fertile indeed in such associations: I might mention the "Sisters of St. John Evangelist," founded by the recent Rumanian convert, Prince Vladimir Ghika; the "Social Sisters of Lyons-St. Alban"; the "Ligue Civique et Sociale," so well represented by Mlle. Butillard; and others less well known: Germany is amazingly prolific in quite recent creations, though the "White Cross" was an inheritance from Austria, a land of tradition and, therefore, unprepared at first to accept the ideals of the founders who, on their side, probably stated them without due discretion. Holland sent its Sisters of Bethlehem, of Bethany, and of Nazareth, and here I have to say frankly that I have not properly had time to digest the material sent to me by the last-named, who seem to me perfectly to express the latest sort of development of the traditional religious life; and as for Hungary, one could have felt sure that its appalling political disasters would have caused its strong thousand-year-old Catholic life to produce its due contemporary offspring—and also, that the relevant names would be perfectly untranslatable!—"The Social Mission," the "Sisters of Social Service"—these are manageable: but, the "Society of Public Culture of Christ the King"? "The Sacred Heart's Daughters of the People"?—these, and others rather like them, do not quite harmonize with our idiom! And no one can be in any touch with Italy without knowing of the "Compagnia di San Paolo," or of the "Society of St. Peter Claver," respectively tempestuous and calm in their careers. I am ashamed to say that I have grown tired of writing out

these names, in alphabetical order, and so I omit Poland, Scotland, even Spain (whose "Damas Catechistas" have long been known and have helped similar societies, even in England, to come into being), and Switzerland. And I acknowledge that I had meant to describe, at some length, a Dutch, a French, and an Italian society of the kind I refer to; but I soon saw that within the limits of this article I could not. It may be necessary, and therefore possible, to do so later on.

Those, who are in any way responsible for movements such as these, have the wise habit of stating principles very clearly at the outset, and also difficulties; for it is always good to put all your cards upon the table; moreover, it is good to leave no objections for the critic to discover; he is half-won already, if he sees that the worst he could surmise has been boldly faced. The Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg himself, in his inaugural address, asserted most emphatically that the new conditions of our new era brought with them new tasks and new sorts of work to be done, and demanded new methods. He was the first to quote St. Paul's dictum that we must be "all things to all men." He insisted that today no one could sit at home, expecting people to seek him there. Souls had to be sought: the sheep, entangled in the thorn-bush, had to be found *in* those thorns, extricated, and carried to its fold. He continued positively to drum upon the word "new." We cannot merely "take over" ancient forms of religious life and work, however well they may have sufficed in by-gone circumstances. We need more elasticity in construction: more freedom to move about: we must find new forms to suit the new conditions, new skins for the new wine. Perhaps one only element must at all costs be retained—the Spirit of Christ and the Love for Souls, the more so, as the modern task is harder than the old one, and the attendant dangers greater. He concluded by saying that the frank discussions foreseen would forward the spread of Catholic Action throughout the world, according to the intentions of the Holy Father, and that he was glad that his diocese had been chosen for so important an assembly, which he blessed with all his heart. This speech was very far from conventional.

It is impossible to summarize all the speeches and dis-

cussions, of which I have been lent an enormous dossier. I will try to extract a few leading considerations.

First, there is no question at all of the congress having been mere "talk," about projects just written down on paper. All these new societies exist, and often do so on a very large scale. We hope some day to write a separate article about the "Grail" movement, for example, in Holland, which has massively-built houses in which the work is actually being done, and from which inspiration and direction proceed.

Second, we have not merely to pray that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost may be given: it is already being given. The Holy Father himself, in his *Caritate Christi*, emphasizes "the powerful breathing of the Holy Spirit now passing over all the earth, drawing especially the souls of the young to the highest Christian ideals, raising them above all human respect, rendering them ready for every sacrifice, even the most heroic; a divine breath that stirs in all hearts, even in spite of themselves, and causes them to feel an inward impulse, a real thirst for God, to be felt by those even who dare not confess to it." If the Holy Father, in his position upon which, more than on any other in the world, knowledge of tragedies and anxieties comes beating, can so speak, we may be sure that his words mark no idle optimism, but correspond to a general truth of which those in narrow circumstances like our own can get only an inkling.

Third, while the "new" spirit is definitely a forthgoing and apostolic one, we need not fear a lessening of the supernatural life within the Church. The miraculous extension of some contemplative orders, and the drastic purification of others, ensure a nucleus of that explicit prayer and penance on which the Church has always thriven; and, there was no symptom in the Solzburg reunion, and there is none in the persons connected with this sort of movement that we have met, of an underrating of the spiritual and supernatural.

However, there are certain points that obviously require attention.

First, if the religious life within its old frontiers required an ever more carefully-safeguarded noviciate, how are the "new" religious, or their associates, to be trained? They

will need more training, not less! The actual organization of noviciates is a problem variously solved. For my part, I would venture to suggest that ordinary sermons, religious schooling, and the orientation of retreats, should all of them *assume* that the average Catholic does not propose to himself *merely* his own salvation, nor even his individual perfection, but takes for granted that the Christian life essentially includes a social, apostolic and self-sacrificing element. Holy Communion itself is a "social" meal. To use a petty little illustration: the old Austro-Hungarian empire seems to me to have collapsed largely because its policy was to keep all its units connected with Vienna and isolated from one another. The moment, therefore, that the throne collapsed, everything flew apart. Christ cannot so collapse: still Holy Communion does not mean a purely individualistic association of each soul with Him, disregarding other souls no less united with the Centre. Anyhow, in proportion as the mental substratum of the Catholic is an apostolic and self-sacrificing one, the easier it will be to crystallize his ideas, and intensify his will, and in short to "train" him, whatever be the actual form of "noviciate" decided on.

Another point is, the recognition that *amount* of prayer, especially of vocal prayer, will probably be diminished, and that prayer in common may have to be quite eliminated, save during annual retreats. We need not be afraid of that, seeing how St. Ignatius himself eliminated the long hours of Choir, and how St. Francis Borgia, actually in contradiction to his personal instinct, struggled against the attempt to increase the Jesuit's time spent in meditation, an increase urged by those who wanted to "revert to type." Even so, he and his successors arranged for more prayer than St. Ignatius himself had intended or foreseen. Such adjustments are quite right; but the *mere* abbreviation need not be alarming; and the current appetite for books like Fr. R. Steuart's *Inward Vision* and *Temples of Eternity*, noticeable even outside the Church, shows, maybe, that the modern world is desirous of a *prayerful attitude of will*, even when it cannot make use of "much speaking."

Another problem is provided by "poverty." I observe that most of these societies detest the hand-to-mouth existence betokened by bazaars, whist-drives and even special

collections. They talk quite frankly of *founded* establishments and regular small incomes. This consoles me when at times I fear I am "flouting Providence" in begging religious enterprises to pay off debts so soon as possible, and not suddenly and passionately beg for help to cope with the annual interest; and, again, to create, as soon as possible even a small permanent capital which shall emancipate them (and their friends) from the periodic harassment of bazaars. (On the other hand, *not* to take a "business-like" view of a situation is often called, I find "flying in the face of Providence." So what with our flying and our flouting, Providence seems, according to human estimates, to have rather a bad time.) But I cannot feel that it is contrary to a spirit of Faith, if the kind of social enterprise now envisaged (anything, for example, comparable to the Y. M. C. A. in a Catholic sense) wants to keep itself really competent. Moreover, I should say that a proper financial basis is necessary, for two reasons. First, because many of these societies are—not "secret," but by no means blazoned forth by the exterior behavior or aspect of their members. Young men and women, pursuing an ordinary social or professional career, are perfectly within their rights if they cherish their ideals and carry out their determination without wearing medals, let alone costumes, calculated to create a chill almost as much as the Roman collar may. If they are thus leading the "religious" life in the normal world, they *must* not advertise themselves as abnormal. Second, just because such men and women are leading their normal life, they have to be able to live it "normally." They have to exercise their apostolate, not only as lawyers, doctors, nurses, but, in restaurants, drawing-rooms, factories and, I suppose, cinemas. Thus they must be able to dispose of their own money, earned or inherited, and, to be trustworthy, and in fact trusted not to do so selfishly, but in genuine pursuance of their ideal.

Obedience. This too provides a problem, because nearly every "permission" they make use of will probably have to be "assumed." Next to never will they get any explicit direction. However, it is a myth that in the established religious Orders one is always getting detailed direction. All sorts of people seem to suppose that Superiors sit in their rooms directly controlling all their subordinates. As

a matter of fact, anything less noticeable than a united policy, in Catholic things, can hardly be thought of. All the same, great reserves of initiative will have to be accredited to a Religious, just in proportion as he or she does not live in community and at least within the normal framework of a "customary" life. Certainly, if such young men and women are to make a good thing of it, their early training will have had to be such as to throw them constantly, but increasingly, on their own resources, with the probability of their making many mistakes, yet learning, and not being dissipated, by experience.

Laymen, I find, complain less than they used to that, when they offer their services to the clergy, they get snubbed. I think the Catholic Evidence Guild has been largely responsible for this. A Society like that of Our Lady of Good Counsel affords every chance to its members to regard their lives as "dedicated" and to use all their opportunities and leisure *within their profession* in a truly apostolic way. The Medical Guild would fain inspire young Catholic doctors with the same ideal; but it has not as yet developed its whole ideal. However, none of these societies is aspiring towards just what the foreign ones mentioned are—being true "religious" congregations (however "private" be their vows), composed of members practically living in the world. None the less, the multiplication of such societies and the intensification of their spirit must infallibly lead up to some such thing. I incline to think that we may see people grouping themselves in concentric circles—an extension of the idea of "Third Orders," or even, of the application of the "Sodality" idea in lands like Hungary. When I was in Budapest, I observed that the enormously developed and active sodality of our Lady seemed, first, to sweep into itself pretty well every young Catholic of good will. Little by little, its directors formed opinions about them, and would say, for instance, "You are not fitted for St. Vincent de Paul work: but you will be invaluable as a writer. So, write!" Again, the White Cross used in old days to consist of a nucleus of men and women who lived in community, under conditions of very great austerity and renunciation. Round this revolved a larger group of people who explicitly devoted their life to some specific task, like working printing-presses or presiding over co-

operative stores. Such a life prevented them, obviously, from leading also a full social or professional career. But around these again, were men and women who pursued their professions in the normal way, earned their living, but definitely regarded themselves as "dedicated" though probably not "vowed" to serving God in and through those professions. You can, of course, honorably earn your living, and then, devote to Catholic service all the margins, like, I suppose, journalists who also do S. V. P. or Apostolate of the Sea work. That is not perfectly the same thing: I am contemplating, rather, a doctor, who should sacrifice all his time and chances to studying mental deficiency, or psychotherapy, *because* he held that so he could best serve Christ *in* his vocation.

An eminent woman-doctor was recently deeply hurt because a priest said to her: "But isn't doctoring rather a Protestant idea?" She would presumably have been doing better to recite office! Apart from the bad theology and bad psychology of this, and St. Paul's doctrine that even eating and drinking can perfectly well be done to the glory of God, it is quite clear that if we insist on ministering to the soul alone, or to confine even part-material ministry to professed religious, two things happen. First: I say to the soldier, for example, "Yes, I belong to a society that professes to help soldiers. I will encourage you to receive the Sacraments; but I have no means of helping you to find a job when you leave the army." He will answer: "Thank you: I'll go somewhere else." And he does so, and if he gets what he needs, that is where his gratitude and allegiance go, and remain. And second, the detestable idea is promulgated that any deep Christian life is to be expected from those only who have canalized themselves within officially "religious" banks; so that the pestilent phrase gains currency: "I have *no vocation*." As if God could create even one soul, without a purpose! As if He could stand indifferent to the fulfilment of that purpose! And as if He would not inspire, and "call" each man or woman to fulfil their several purposes! Each living soul has a Vocation.

We may, then, in these anxious yet hopeful days, be assisting at the tentative hazardous evolution of a new form of religious life, as epoch-making in the Church as the Franciscan, Jesuit, or Vincentian evolutions were in their time.

The Liturgy in Relation to Life

(Concluded)

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III

TO the course of natural life, from its beginnings to its end or return to its source, also the sacramental liturgy wonderfully corresponds. In the administration of the sacrament of Baptism the answer to the first questions asked the sponsors indicate that the gift of faith is sought which is the beginning of life everlasting. That life, according to the instruction, means carrying out the will of God, especially His commandment of love which is the end of life. The child is in the seed-stage of life, itself remaining as it is in relation to spiritual life, unless brought in contact with its proper medium so as to break forth into the new life. The child is to be a good seed, for "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." The proper medium is Baptism which breaks asunder the bonds holding the soul to Satan and effects a rebirth unto the childhood of God; but death to sin must first take place, just as a seed must first die to itself as a seed before new life can proceed. Wherefore St. Paul reminded the Romans, "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death?"

The children of the kingdom, thus born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," require strength to withstand life's tempests and the adverse infernal influences. Such strength is bestowed in the sacrament of Confirmation wherein the Holy Ghost imparts His sevenfold endowment of grace.

Should one in the enjoyment of divine life, through wilful exposure to the severe influences which wage war against that life, be severed from God like a tree uprooted or a branch broken off, death inevitably ensues. Existence is still there, but not life. Such a one can be reengrafted or replanted, and again become a living member of the body of Christ in the sacrament of Penance. For such a restoration, however, there must again precede a death to sin through sorrow and self-crucifixion, for only if we are "planted together in the likeness of His death, shall we also be in the likeness of His resurrection."

For growth, food is obviously necessary. For growth in the spiritual life our Savior has provided a banquet for His own at which He Himself is the spiritual Food. He is that "Bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world," and so potent it is that "if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever." Then in natural life, sooner or later, a union of the life-forces of kind must take place to insure continuance of life in the form of fruit or seed, so that upon the death of an individual, life might go on. The Creator of life has thus ordained it to prevent sterility and death without issue. Thus in the one instance our Lord has made Himself our Food unto immortal life; in the other the Savior has made Himself the Bridegroom of the pure of heart to have them fruitful in good works. As He said, "I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth. . . . That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, . . . that they may be made perfect in one." How profoundly significant is this loving oneness of divine life! It is the necessary condition for the dissemination of this life on earth for the spread of God's kingdom. Only through such an intimate union with our Redeemer and a loving union with one another can that fruit which is the seed of immortal life be brought forth; for as He Himself said, "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."

This sublime union of the redeemed in one another and all in the Redeemer is really founded upon the unity of the three divine Persons, with whom it is so actual that the three Persons are but one God. A like union is to prevail, as the liturgy of the sacrament of Matrimony inculcates, in

the marriage bond. To the contracting persons the priest says, "I join you together in marriage in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Epistle and Gospel of the Nuptial Mass, at which the marriage of a Catholic couple takes place, conveys to them our Lord's command that the "two shall be in one flesh"; and in the Epistle, moreover, St. Paul compares the union with that existing between the Head and the members of the Church. And that such a union may be fruitful, the Church prays: "Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon these Thy servants, and graciously protect Thy institutions, whereby Thou hast provided for the propagation of mankind." What a sublime corrective for the modern warped conception of the marriage bond, so often broken at will and so menacingly unfruitful! An attempt has even been made to cast a halo of religion about the latter phase; however, as a writer in the *Commonweal* recently remarked, it is not a religion of life, but a religion of death.

There is still another union destined to bear fruit for the kingdom of God—a mystical marriage to bring forth, rear and nourish children in the supernatural order. It is an espousal like that of Christ with the Church. This espousal of the "*alter Christus*" with the Church is consecrated in the sacrament of Holy Orders. Thus, speaking of the highest of the orders, St. Epiphanius said: "The order of Bishops has for its chief purpose to produce new fathers, for its business is to propagate fathers in the Church. The other [the priesthood], unable to engender fathers, in the laver of regeneration brings forth sons of the Church." In his exhortation the ordaining bishop points out that "thus out of many members, distinguished as to dignity, the one body of Christ is formed." He furthermore refers to the good fruits that are to be brought forth: "The office of the priest is to offer sacrifice, to bless, to govern, to preach, and to baptize"; moreover, the newly ordained are to be "perfect in the practice of their faith, in other words, they should be well grounded in the twofold virtue of charity which is the love of God and one's neighbor." And the prayer at the mingling of water and wine, which the newly ordained pronounce as one in their concelebration of the Mass with the bishop, has here an especial significance: "Grant us by the mystery of this wine and water to be

partakers of the divine nature of Him who deigned to assume our human nature." This union, together with the receiving of the Holy Ghost, is furthermore effected through the Communion with our Lord, before which the bishop and the ordained pray to Him for perseverance in remaining as one in will with Him. Finally, the fruit, as a result of the union with Christ, is referred to in the second Post-communion prayer of the ordination Mass: "In Thy goodness, O Lord, lift up by Thy continual help those whom Thou dost nourish with Thy sacraments, that we may attain the fruit of Thy Redemption, both by Thy mysteries and by our lives."

The last sacrament, Extreme Unction, ordinarily corresponds to the harvest time of life. At harvest time fruits are gathered in and the grain is separated from husk and chaff, then stowed away in its proper place. The sacrament of Extreme Unction is primarily intended to prepare a soul about to return to its Source, so that it will be found worthy at the time when the Lord "will gather the wheat into His barn." That the soul about to depart may speedily and safely arrive in the assembly of the just in heaven, the sacrament frees it, proportionate to its disposition, from whatever vestiges of sin remaining. Hence it is to be administered after the sacramental absolution and the reception of our Lord in holy Communion, unless extraordinary circumstances intervene. The prayer after the anointing recalls the words of St. James: "Is any man sick among you, let him call in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." This saving and raising up refers to the life of the soul; however, if it is expedient for the saving of a soul to remain for a time longer on earth, God may grant through the sacrament also a restoration of the health of the body. Wherefore the liturgy also provides a prayer that God may look with favor upon the sick person "failing from bodily weakness, and refresh the soul which Thou hast created, that being corrected by Thy chastisement, he may find himself cured by Thy healing."

IV

Natural life is like a passing shadow. The heavens, the earth, "the lilies, the grass of the field which is today and tomorrow is cast into the oven," are forever either changing or passing away. Yet this shadow has much to tell, even those unenlightened by faith, of the abiding realities that exist behind the visible forms. One should come to understand that behind it all is the living Creator whom nature is ever praising and glorifying, in the sense that—as the German proverb expresses it—"the work praises the master." As a great painting reveals the unseen mind, the art, the soul of its creator, so the beauties, the fitness, the harmony, the goodness and truth inherent in the type afford a glimpse of what these must be in the Archetype. As King David sang in the eighteenth psalm:

The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands.

Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge. There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world.

One who has become aware of what the shadow has to tell and then reflects on himself in the scheme of things, must also come to realize that he, too, is to lift up his mind and soul in praise and thanksgiving to his Maker—both through the goodness, beauty and truthfulness of his life and through his gift of speech and song. A means thereto is the Church's liturgy of praise or prayer as commonly contained in the divine Office and recited from the Breviary.

This liturgy has also this in common with life that it possesses continuity. There have been changes, developments, transformations, which are still going on, for the liturgy is a living worship of God; yet there are elements which connect it with the ancient past. The psalmist tells us, "I arose at midnight to give praise to Thee. . . . Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee." In St. Benedict's time monks rose at two in the morning for Matins and Lauds, and met at such times during the day as the seven canonical hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and

Compline indicate. This Office appears to be an outgrowth of the Vigil services preceding the celebration of holy Mass on feastdays and of the observances which followed. In apostolic times Christians met at one time for prayer service, again for "the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers, . . . continuing daily with one accord, praising God"; and as St. Paul required: "Admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God." Theirs was an adaptation of the Jewish synagogue service which our Lord and the apostles also observed at the Last Supper, consisting of introductory praises, readings from the Law and the Prophets, the recitation or chanting of Psalms or excerpts therefrom and benedictions. At the Last Supper, however, the essential difference was the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, the clean oblation of the Lamb of God Himself. Today the Office is in part grouped around holy Mass and consists of the Lord's Prayer, a solemn Invitatory at Matins, hymns, psalms with antiphons, readings from the Old and New Testaments as well as from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the Gospel, benedictions, responsories, versicles, and the prayer and commemorations of the day.

This liturgy, as with everything else in life, is evaluated according to its conformity with the purpose for which it is intended. The mere word would be of little value without the accompanying truth, since our Lord said, "God is a spirit; and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth." Only then can the worship of God be said to conform to what it was intended for, namely unto God's glory, if our life is holy, fruitful, and itself is an oblation of love to God. This our Lord made very plain in His discourse to and prayer for His disciples at the conclusion of the Last Supper. He pointed out the center which all must seek—Himself. Union with Him in love is ascertained if there is obedience to God's will, which requires the love of fellowman, even unto the laying down of one's life for him. The bringing forth of this, the greatest of fruits, as well as the many others, will entail severe hardships, but these and the world can be overcome in Him and in the Holy Ghost. Thus one is made perfect and the Father is glorified in truth. St. Augustine therefore admonished: "Let the harmony of thy life ever rise

as a song, so that thou mayest never cease to praise. . . . If thou wilt give praise, sing, then, not only with the lips, but sweep the chords upon the psalter of good works."

V

The center of the liturgy, around which all revolves, is the crucified and risen Savior, who, especially in the sacrificial worship, perpetually renews His redemptive work. "When you shall have lifted up the Son of man," He affirmed, "then you shall know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me. . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." He is that central Sun about which everything in the liturgy turns, toward whom everything gravitates; and if we respond and are drawn to Him, however great the pull from His opposites may be, we shall be sustained and at peace and in harmony with God's eternal law.

Ever recurring throughout the liturgy and in countless ways signified and carried into effect, in those properly disposed, is what the Psalmist has expressed in the words, "Turn away from evil and do good"; our Savior in the Parable of the Prodigal Son: and St. Paul by saying, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Ever and again the idea strikes home, in word, song, Sacrifice and ceremony, that we are to die to self so as to live—through and in Christ—for God. We come to realize the meaning of the Cross, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and come in contact with the graces for sanctification so as to glorify God in truth. These are the moments in the rhythmic, loving heart-beats of Christ living in His Church.

One perceives this rhythmic living force at work in the Church's year—in the penitential Advent season followed by the commemorative rebirth with Christ, and in a lenten period of fasting and self-denial, so that after suffering with Him for our sins, we may participate in the glory of His resurrection. In the reception of the sacraments there is this same recurrent withdrawal from evil and reaching out for the divine life, as for instance in the sacrament of Baptism, with its renunciations of Satan and the exorcisms go-

ing before the actual washing in the water of regeneration unto the childhood of God. One discerns it in the blessings imparted in Christ's name, and in the Orations at Mass—typical is the Collect said on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost: "O God, whose providence in the ordering of all things faileth not: we very humbly beseech Thee, from us to put away all that is hurtful, and upon us to bestow all that is to our good." In each of the six parts of Mass itself one notes how acknowledgments of having sinned, appeals for divine mercy, and acts of self-surrender alternate with divine praise and adoration, with meeting our Savior's oblation with ours, and approaching to receive Him, the Life of the soul.

In normal life this rhythm, which is likened to the wavelets upon waves and these upon billows, proceeds in an ascendant inclination until the crest is reached, whereupon it as gradually declines. Biologists call the successive building-up tendency in the stuff of life "anabolism," and the breaking-down and ridding process "katabolism." The crest is the point of turning in favor of the latter in the descending rhythm, until the organism dies. In the span of normal spiritual life on earth the soul may have its falls, but it ever rises again. It does not reach its crest until it takes its flight and finds its rest in God. For it to have descents greater than ascents is abnormal, for "the just man shall fall seven times and *he shall rise again*: but the wicked shall fall down into evil." It follows that for repeated onward and upward life the soul must lay hold, more and more, of the Source of its life. Its Savior, who is the "Bread of Life," is this sublime Source: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever"; and He provides all necessary graces: "The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."

What term have we to express the anabolism or the perpetual renewing and upbuilding of the life of the soul? Is there a better one than that expressed first in the Mass of Easter Sunday? The Introit begins with "*Resurrexi, et adhuc tecum sum*—I am risen and am still with thee." Ever to withdraw man from self, from what is earthly, sinful, and not of God, ever to raise him up—this is the redemptive work of Christ applied by the Holy Ghost through the

liturgy of the Church. It is the restoring and rejuvenating power of the Redeemer that makes certain also the perpetuity of the Church. In his book, *The Resurrection of Rome*, Mr. G. K. Chesterton tells us that she is eternal because of the ability ever to rise up again, "for the 'word' for Rome is 'resurgam.'" But this ability in the mystical body is there because of the presence and work of Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life."